

CHAPS: basic information and decision-making power

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Since the North Dakota Beef Cattle Improvement Association (NDBCIA) was established in 1963, beef cattle records have been the organization's main operational focus. Annually, the NDBCIA processes thousands of records for producers throughout North Dakota and the north-central region. Additionally, there are many producers spread throughout North America.

Since much of the data that is utilized in the BeefTalk columns comes from CHAPS, an explanation is warranted. CHAPS (Cow Herd Appraisal Performance Software) is a data intensive beef production record system developed in 1985. This computer program, originally written in DOS, was operational in a Windows format in 2000. CHAPS is available for downloading (www.CHAPS2000.com) so producers can use the program on their computer. CHAPS data analysis is also available by mailing cattle records to the central processing facility at the Dickinson Research Extension Center, 1133 State Ave., Dickinson, ND 58601.

CHAPS 2000 can be described as the beef industry's tool for acquiring knowledge. The computer program tracks beef cattle production from conception to carcass, analyzing performance, genetics and meat quality along the way. The data then becomes the knowledge, which is the power to affect changes within a beef producer's herd so cow-calf producers can make the decisions necessary to produce high quality beef for the food industry.

CHAPS was developed by the North Dakota State University Extension Service through the North Dakota Beef Cattle Improvement Association and has been reviewed and approved by the national Integrated Resource Management (NCBA-IRM) Coordinating Committee of the National Cattlemen's Beef Association. The more documented records you have available on each of your cows, the better equipped you are to make bold, decisive decisions about culling, selecting and mating systems.

The managerial decisions producers make today can have a huge impact on the future of their herd for many years. Aggressive cattle producers competing in today's complex beef market need to utilize all the tools available to reduce guesswork and add predictability to their herd performance. CHAPS is one of those tools.

The NDSU Extension Service, in cooperation with the NDBCIA, provides managerial reports generated through the CHAPS program. These reports assist producers with total herd evaluations. A common problem with record systems is the accumulation of mounds of data with little effective utilization of this data.

The ultimate purpose of this program is to ensure that each NCBA-IRM-SPA (standard performance analysis) trait is balanced within the operation and simultaneously evaluated. For more effective utilization of individual herd data, production benchmark values utilizing the NCBA-IRM-SPA calculations were obtained from CHAPS herds. Individual herd confidentiality is practiced when developing the benchmark averages.

CHAPS compares each producer's performance against the benchmarks. The analysis is provided based on contemporary groups with breakouts within the groups defined by breed, sex of calf, sire, etc. The report functions provide producers with extensive information about their cow herd.

As a comprehensive analysis system, CHAPS provides all the SPA analysis as suggested by the Beef Improvement Federation. Even within the current environment of enhanced data records and tracking systems, the old standbys can produce effectively by making sense of data, which is needed to assist operators prepare for the future.

CHAPS is an effective tool, currently available and ready to work. If the urge hits, don't hesitate to call (701) 483-2045 or go to www.CHAPS2000.com on the Web and become involved with a well-seasoned and strong organization, the North Dakota Beef Cattle Improvement Association.

May you find all your USAIP ear tags.

Your comments are always welcome at www.BeefTalk.com. For more information, contact the North Dakota Beef Cattle Improvement Association, 1133 State Avenue, Dickinson, ND 58601 or go to www.CHAPS2000.com on the Internet. In correspondence about this column, refer to BT0215.



CHAPS 2000